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# Anicia Juliana: The Rightful Ruler And Her Controversial Construction

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 November 10, 2011  
 Hagia Sophia ART120  
 Kriszta Kotsis

## **Anicia Juliana: The Rightful Ruler And Her Controversial Construction**

In 527 AD, an esteemed member of elite Byzantine society, Anicia Juliana, dedicated her private church of St. Polyeuktos in the city of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> As the largest and most magnificent structure in Constantinople, St. Polyeuktos stood on the Mese, the leading thoroughfare in the ancient capital, near the church of Holy Apostles.<sup>2</sup> In 532AD, Emperor Justinian commissioned the reconstruction of Constantinople's Church of Hagia Sophia, which would become arguably one of the world's greatest and most impressive architectural structures.<sup>3</sup> However, one cannot ignore the resemblance between these two structures. Upon viewing the Hagia Sophia, still in existence today, one can see the clear ties to the ancient church honoring the martyred St. Polyeuktos. Through studying the two churches, however, it is made evident that these two structures were not commissioned for solely religious purposes. Anicia Juliana constructs her St. Polyeuktos Church as an architectural masterpiece, setting precedent for the Hagia Sophia's later construction, but also as a prime player in a socio-political game played for power, control, and influence over the whole of the Byzantine Empire.

### **Political Controversy**

Political competition was one motive that fueled the construction of Anicia Juliana's private basilica. "The Byzantine empire developed no simple, clearly defined

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<sup>1</sup> Harrison, R. M. 1989. A temple for Byzantium: the discovery and excavation of Anicia Juliana's palace-church in Istanbul. Austin: University of Texas Press.

<sup>2</sup> Mango, Cyril A., and Ihor Ševčenko. 1968. "Remains of the church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople". *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*. 29 (15): p. 244

<sup>3</sup> Completed in 537, a mere decade after the St. Polyeuktos dedication. *Ibid.* p. 22

law or method of succession to the throne” and therefore, many problems and controversies ensued.<sup>4</sup> For centuries, the title of emperor was passed down to the man whom the prior emperor had chosen.<sup>5</sup> While there was some consideration for dynastic and family inheritance, no explicit lineage can be drawn connecting all Roman and Byzantine Emperors because no succession plan was ever established and implemented. For many heirs, the announcement of their future rule resulted in the placement of a target on their life, for many men were killed by competition long before they would ever take the throne. An attempted system of official succession was instituted in 293 AD where two junior emperors known as Caesars ruled alongside two emperors so that when the emperor passed on, his Caesar would be trained and ready to take the throne. However, this system only lasted year 313 AD proving that organized succession was non-existent due to its inability to remain authoritative. Additionally, an empire split into Eastern and Western sections divided loyalties, presenting citizens with two different governments with their respective royal lines. While there was overlap between East and West and many rulers came from lineage of one or both royal families, no distinct concrete formula of succession rights was established for either part of the empire and instead, Emperors were simply expected to appoint their successor during their own lifetime.<sup>6</sup>

Justinian took the throne through an unlikely succession. Emperor Justin ruled from 518-527 AD and, because he had no sons of his own, took his nephew, Justinian, under his wing and trained him to rule. Educated and later adopted by his Uncle,

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<sup>4</sup> Geanakoplos, Deno John. 1984. *Byzantium: church, society, and civilization seen through contemporary eyes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 39

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p. 39

<sup>6</sup> Geanakoplos, Deno. p. 40

Justinian rose within the military, all the while gaining authority, recognition, and power within the empire. As he continued to gain prestige it was made clear that Justinian was destined to take the throne. He took care of his competition, making sure that he was the only surviving choice to inherit the throne.<sup>7</sup> As was typical for the time, it was suggested that Justin appoint his own heir to work alongside him as “coemperor” during the remainder of his lifetime and it comes as no surprise that this coemperor would be his young nephew, Justinian.<sup>8</sup> After removing all competition and being appointed coemperor in 525, Justinian was the next in line to rule the empire and, in 527, Justinian was officially appointed as Emperor of Byzantium.<sup>9</sup> However, given the unorthodox manner of succession, many elite members of Byzantine society were outraged that their pre-existing royal lineage was overlooked.

Anicia Juliana was one of the elite who was deeply offended by Justinian’s inheritance and, for just cause. Anicia Juliana’s ties to an imperial bloodline cannot be overemphasized in reasoning the cause for her frustration and the consequent construction of her marvelous private church. As daughter of the final Western Emperor, Flavius Anicus Olybrius, Granddaughter of Emperor Valentinian III and Great Granddaughter of Eastern Emperor Theodosius II and Empress Eudocia, Anicia Juliana’s lineage can be traced back to Theodosius I and even further back to Constantine the Great.<sup>10</sup> Anicia Juliana was arguably the “most aristocratic and the wealthiest inhabitant

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<sup>7</sup> “Vitalian would naturally pose greatest threat to Justinian himself. It is therefore no surprise to find that by July 520 the murder of Vitalian was conveniently arranged, almost certainly by Justinian.”  
Barker, John W. 1966. *Justinian and the later Roman Empire*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. p. 66

<sup>8</sup> Geanakoplos, Deno. p. 40

<sup>9</sup> Barker. p.66

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, R. M. 1989. *A temple for Byzantium: the discovery and excavation of Anicia Juliana's palace-church in Istanbul*. Austin: University of Texas Press.; Maas, Michael. 1992. *John Lydus and the Roman past: antiquarianism and politics in the age of Justinian*. London: Routledge. p. 439

of Constantinople” and could be given cause to covet the throne for that reason alone.<sup>11</sup>

As the last heiress to this royal line, Anicia Juliana took it as her personal responsibility to form an “immortal dynasty” for her family, desiring to promote them as the family of “rightful rulers”.<sup>12</sup> Not only did she desire to emphasize her family’s royal connections as a whole but also she clearly sought to draw connections with her female ancestors and to assert herself as a similar woman of influence and authority within a powerful Empire.

Juliana had multiple female role models in her family to set precedent for her political involvement in Byzantine Society. Her grandmother, Empress Linicia Eudoxia founded the church of St. Euphemia and later between 461 and 472 AD Juliana’s mother, Placidia, added her own renovations onto the same church. Her great-grandmother, Empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II, had previously provided means for the construction of the church formerly located on the same site of Juliana’s St. Polyeuktos.<sup>13</sup> But perhaps the single most important association was to her distant relative, Helena the mother of Constantine the Great. Helena was known throughout the empire to be a very pious woman, a great patroness of architecture, and was revered as one of the most impressive women of her time.<sup>14</sup> It would have been quite simple for Juliana to only address her lineage to the great emperors within her family but instead she focused on her female line of descent emphasizing the importance of “the female role model” in Byzantine elite and even royal society, especially in regards to female patronage.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid p. 439

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Empress Eudocia’s church, also named for the obscure martyr St. Polyeuktos, set precedent for Juliana’s construction. Juliana kept the name to honor the same Saint as her Grandmother, and also in order to stress an imperial linkage between herself and the Empress. Harrison. p. 33

<sup>14</sup> Maas p. 439-441. Many imperial women were referred to as “New Helena” if and when they supported great building campaigns imitating the example of the great patroness herself. These structures would then be referred to as “Helena commissions” created to celebrate the family as well as the patroness herself.

<sup>15</sup> Maas p. 441

The common blood and simple births of the current Byzantine rulers outraged Anicia Juliana and other members of the Byzantine elite. Many rulers were not of a royal bloodline or, in fact, were more removed from the imperial lineage than Anicia Juliana. Theodora, for example, was empress of Byzantium, a role that Juliana clearly coveted and desired. Theodora was born into a rather poor family, daughter of a circus trainer, and grew up in the world of public performance.<sup>16</sup> It is not clear if she worked as a prostitute, however through primary works such as Procopius' infamous *Secret History*, we are given a rather negative image of the Empress. Many elite felt overlooked and under-acknowledged as "a new royal family sprung from peasants and actresses... thrust itself into the ruling classes".<sup>17</sup> Under this new royal family, it seemed that the tricks and trades of common life were brought into the court. Members of the royal family had begun to sell titles and "offices... just as men of the marketplace hawk[ed] their fruits for sale".<sup>18</sup> Titles that Anicia Juliana and other members of her family felt entitled to were being sold and given to the highest bidder. Additionally, the new royalty treated the old elite in a rather atrocious manner. Justinian and Theodora were quite satisfied and felt quite accomplished to have received their new positions in society.<sup>19</sup> Both, having come from such simple births, felt a sense of pride in their authority. Theodora in particular took her frequent processions as a prime opportunity to assert her newfound status and humiliate the members of the old elite. Additionally, the emperor and empress enforced strict rules of etiquette within the court to subjugate the old elite and, therefore, increase

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<sup>16</sup> Barker, John W. p. 69

<sup>17</sup> Evans, J. A. S. 1996. *The age of Justinian: the circumstances of imperial power*. London: Routledge.

<sup>18</sup> Geanakoplos, Deno. p. 54

<sup>19</sup> Theodora shared her good fortune with her family and friends helping her sisters to marry well and finding good, wealthy, high-ranking husbands for her friends from the theatre. Theodora's marriage to Justinian "opened the ranks of the elite for others" Evans p. 101

their power and authority in the Empire.<sup>20</sup>

It is easy to reason that Anicia Juliana's construction of the St. Polyeuktos church was derived from political bias. The "most aristocratic and wealthiest" woman in Constantinople was not going to meagerly observe a member of the lower class take control over the empire without taking some sort of political stand. To reassert her seemingly lost power and authority over Constantinople, Juliana began construction on the largest church of her time.<sup>21</sup> An unprecedented structure, both in size and opulence, was the perfect vehicle to make an explicit statement of political discontentment against the emperor given that imperial construction was the primary means of propaganda used by the Emperor to assert his own authority. If someone, especially a woman, were to construct an imperial structure that surpassed all existing constructions, it would negatively affect the rule of the Emperor presenting him as an inferior authority throughout the empire. This can be further seen through the 76-line poem Juliana commissioned to circumscribe the nave, courtyard, and narthex of her church.

This inscription is notorious for Anicia Juliana's outlandish statements, exaggerating her greatness. The poem can be dissected into two distinct portions: first praising Juliana for her connections to the royal family and next to describe the church and its wonder.<sup>22</sup> Her royal lineage is praised to an extensive degree saying Juliana is of "bright and blessed parents, sharing their royal blood in the fourth generation...following on the well founded footsteps of her parents" and giving "birth to a family which is

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid p. 101-102

<sup>21</sup> In addition to its insurmountable size, Juliana challenged Justinian's authority by gilding the roof of her church with the gold from her personal treasury. She was asked by the emperor at the beginning of his reign to make a financial donation to the public treasury. Instead of offering her wealth, she had her gold cast into tiles and had them installed on the ceiling of her church. She then invited the Emperor to her church to view her wealth and flaunt her insurgence. Mango and Ševcenko. p.244

<sup>22</sup> Harrison. 33

immortal, always treading the full path of piety”.<sup>23</sup> Concluding, the inscription acknowledges that the “countless swarm of labours [were] accomplished for the souls of her parents, and for her own life, and for the lives of those who are to come and those who already are,” thus making a clear statement that her work was to not only sing the praises of her remarkable construction but to forever associate the construction with her lineage, establishing an immortal royal family.<sup>24</sup> This act of explicit, public boasting was only deemed appropriate for Emperors.<sup>25</sup> No one except the Emperor would be permitted to regard his or herself with such greatness in such a public manner. Thus it was through her commission that Anicia Juliana was able to take a propagated stand against Justinian’s empire not only for her family, or herself, but also for her entire class of neglected nobles.<sup>26</sup>

### **Religion as a Political Asset**

Another political vehicle used in this construction was a form of Religious Politics. By modern standards one may not affiliate religion with politics and government however, in ancient Byzantium, religion was the foundation upon which the government and the empire were based. In 313 AD, Constantine the Great granted Christians and all other religions in fact the freedom to practice and worship freely in the Roman Empire.<sup>27</sup> From this point forward, until the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the empire was run on the beliefs of Christianity and the church was regarded as a primary political power player. Furthermore, by the time of her construction, the biblical

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<sup>23</sup> Harrison. p. 33

<sup>24</sup> Lines 74-76 of the poem. Ibid p. 33-34

<sup>25</sup> Evans p. 101

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Gardner, Helen, Fred S. Kleiner, Christin J. Mamiya, and Richard G. Tansey. 2001. Gardner's art through the ages. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers.



stories and the history of the Christian church was well established and well understood by citizens throughout the empire, regardless of status or education level. Anicia Juliana took advantage of this widespread knowledge and implemented one specific Christian symbol into her construction.

The poem inscribed around St. Polyeuktos sings exuding praise of Anicia Juliana's construction and at a certain point claims that "'alone [she] had conquered time and surpassed the wisdom of the celebrated Solomon, raising a temple to receive God'".<sup>28</sup> The Temple of Solomon served as the main temple in ancient Jerusalem and was regarded as one of the "wonders of the world".<sup>29</sup> This lavish temple, constructed in the early tenth century BC was extraordinary and exceedingly marked the reign of the Great King Solomon. This temple survived centuries after Solomon's reign and continued to be a symbol of "divine kingship and royal and indeed, heavenly opulence".<sup>30</sup> It is no doubt, therefore, why this power-seeking woman would desire to model her own private church after this royal opulent symbol of piety.

The similarities between Juliana's St. Polyeuktos and the Temple of Solomon are in fact too many to list in this paper, however some primary connections include the use of the royal cubit as a unit of measurement, the use of peacock and palm tree decoration, and the church's basic location. To parallel her church to that of the Great Solomon, Anicia Juliana describes the grandeur of her church in the inscription poem in the form of cubits, an ancient, biblical measurement used to record the length and overall size both in

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<sup>28</sup> Also, see figure 6 for images of the uncovered blocks of marble showcasing the poem inscription. Harrison. 138

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

the bible and in accounts of the Temple of Solomon.<sup>31</sup> In order to continue the parallel to the holy church, Anicia Juliana employed artisans to adorn the capitals of the pillars of the church to strongly resemble the ornate leaf, peacock, and palm tree marble work found in the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the mere location of her construction mirrored that of Solomon's; Anicia Juliana's construction was also the extension to her own personal palace.<sup>33</sup> All of these parallels were intentional, proving to us that Anicia Juliana was not only well versed in Christian iconography and architecture but was also seeking to evoke a similar sense of awe and wonder that had been associated with the well-known Temple of the great King Solomon. The similarities were no coincidence but rather extremely intentional in creating parallels to a great King who also was a well-revered and pious ruler.<sup>34</sup>

Anicia Juliana utilized another form of religious, political propaganda in the form of her allusion, both in text and mosaic, to the baptism of Constantine the Great. Many Byzantine citizens would have been able to recount the story of Constantinople's founder's conversion and subsequent baptism seeing as this story led to the end of Christian persecution and the tolerance of widespread religion throughout the empire. Anicia Juliana represented this pivotal point in religious, and political, history by representing the Baptism of Constantine in a mosaic lying over the main entrance to her

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> See figures 1 and 2 for images of the marble decoration. Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> In addition, at the completion of his Hagia Sophia construction, it is recorded that Justinian himself also paralleled his accomplishment to that of Solomon saying, "Solomon, I have outdone thee." This proclamation additionally adds reason to believe that Justinian's construction was in fact commissioned to outdo that of Anicia Juliana and to disprove her power in the empire.

Harrison, Martin, and Ann Terry. 1995. "A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana's Palace Church in Istanbul". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 63 (3): 623.

narthex (figures 3 and 4)<sup>35</sup> This mosaic depicting Constantine's baptism, when surrounded by the inscription, associating Anicia Juliana to her imperial lineage and thus linking herself to the emperor, she created yet another important parallel to a political and religious force. The interaction of the mosaic with the surrounding text emphasizes Anicia Juliana's lineage and royal heritage while also connecting her to a very holy and popular emperor amongst Early Byzantine Christians.

Anicia Juliana additionally utilized the importance of the papacy to gain power and recognition within the empire. Although the papacy had not been on precisely good terms with the Byzantine Emperor for a given amount of time, it is documented that in the 520s, Pope John I made the first papal trip from Rome to Constantinople, to visit the Empire.<sup>36</sup> Due to the fragility between the papacy and the emperor, both Anicia Juliana and Emperor Justinian knew the vital importance of the Pope's timely visit. The emperor and the papacy had to maintain a stable and functional relationship to avoid friction within the Empire. Therefore, during this trip it is inevitable that the Pope was urged to visit the St. Polyeuktos Church. Anicia Juliana would have seen the tension between the papacy and the emperor and used her "pious" and seemingly "religious" construction to prove her holiness and faithfulness to the church in front of her biggest earthly critic: the Pope. Knowing that the Emperor and the papacy were not on good terms, Anicia Juliana arranged for the Pope to visit her and pray in her church so that she could be recognized by the Pope himself as a devout Christian woman having recognized her financial

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<sup>35</sup>"Numerous fragments of mosaic were recovered from the excavation [of St. Polyeuktos], but only a few convey even a hint of the decorative scheme of the iconography" (see figures 3 and 4) Fowden, Garth, "Constantine, Silvester and the Church of S. Polyeuctus in Constantinople," *Journal of Roman Archaeology*; Volume 7, 1994, Pg 276

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.280

dedication to the Church.<sup>37</sup>

## **Gender as a Social Construct**

A secondary vignette in which we must analyze Anicia Juliana's construction is through the issue of gender as a social construct in Byzantine Society. During the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century in the Byzantine Empire, a set of understood gender roles dictated what was and wasn't appropriate in society. However first and foremost, it is necessary to clearly define the difference between what is "gender" as opposed to what is "sex". The term "sex" refers to the biological, chromosomal making that determines whether a person is male or female. However, "gender" is a term used to categorize the behaviors and attributes commonly associated to each sex.<sup>38</sup> It is important to understand that it is gender, the socially constructed category that defines how members of society interact with one another. The common gender constructs during Anicia Juliana's time dictated that men were preordained to procreate, be the head of the house, and manage the worldly affairs. In contrast, women found their role in bearing children, caring for the dependent members of the family (i.e. the elderly and the young), and manage the domestic household affairs.<sup>39</sup> These were the implied constructs that defined the men and women of Byzantium, forcing them in some cases to deny themselves for the sake of what was socially acceptable. However while these social guidelines were widely accepted, they were often not followed.

Where the Emperor would strictly enforce rules of the court, the Empire was more lenient on enforcing gender roles. Granted, society still disapproved of men and women

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid p. 281

<sup>38</sup> Ringrose, Kathryn M. 2003. *The perfect servant: eunuchs and the social construction of gender in Byzantium*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 4

<sup>39</sup> Ibid p. 5

who did not embody the Byzantine “ideal”, but, if these constructs were definite, we would see very few Byzantine women reaching beyond their domestic lives. These ideals were socially constructed and therefore were “made up of building blocks...maintained by society... that [were] rarely challenged or even perceived.”<sup>40</sup> And yet women in Byzantium regularly challenged these ideals. Women played a more than active role in religion, family business, the workforce<sup>41</sup> and, as seen by Anicia Juliana’s example, in patronage and politics. In fact, although the father was referred to as the head of the household, the mother was “the dominant figure within the home”.<sup>42</sup> Female involvement in these atypical female compartments of Byzantium shows that as a society, Byzantium was comfortable with alternative, more flexible ideas of gender categories that combined constructed male and female ideals.

Gender roles were not always enforced simply by propriety but rather by laws that were gender biased. Byzantium was structured in a way that negated female upward mobility and instead highlighted males in leading roles of society. Byzantium was a patriarchal society and women were “dependent on men”.<sup>43</sup> As previously established, it was not out of the ordinary for women to be involved in life outside of the home in 6<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium and yet it was made much harder for women to gain affluence, education, power, or authority for themselves because of laws regarding property and inheritance. It was customary for lineage to be traced through the father and property to be passed down to the oldest son. Men were clearly under the protection of law where women were left to fend for themselves. It was even considered acceptable for the male

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid p. 5

<sup>41</sup> Women could either have reputable work such as scribes or not, such as innkeepers or prostitutes. Maas p. 438

<sup>42</sup> Genokopolos p.302

<sup>43</sup> Maas p. 437

to be adulterous whereas the woman could not because it would “throw the legitimacy of his heirs into question”.<sup>44</sup> This set of laws stresses the focus of Byzantine society on legitimate male inheritance. The only cases where women were protected by the law and given any legal authority were the laws regarding the widowed.<sup>45</sup> The gender-reliant framework of Byzantine law made it quite difficult for elite, royal women, like Anicia Juliana to take a political stand against male authority and gain influence for her family dynasty. The gender constructs of the legal system held women in their appropriate roles in society and kept them from gaining influence in society if their male family members lost their political power.

### **The Power of Patronage**

Because of their confinement politically, women were able to use patronage as a means to influence society in a powerful public manner. Patronage, by definition, is a male dominated concept.<sup>46</sup> However, patronage was a publicly accepted role for elite women to make their voices heard and women were often encouraged to support the arts as way for women to prove their level of education, wealth, and importance in society.<sup>47</sup> Anicia Juliana clearly utilized this conception to make her importance known throughout Constantinople.

Anicia Juliana was confident that she could assert her power, authority and influence in Constantinople through her patronage of the arts. Juliana used her commissions of religious art to promote her family’s dynastic ambition while presenting

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<sup>44</sup> Maas p. 437

<sup>45</sup> In this case, the woman was allowed to work and inherit the property of the male in order to insure the security of her family. Ibid

<sup>46</sup> *Pater* latin meaning father rooting the word Patronage to have a male connotation. Ibid p. 438

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

herself as a pious woman of God.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the church of St. Polyeuktos, she was also known to have commissioned several other churches including the Church of the Virgin en tois Honoratois, the Church of St. Euphemia en tois Olybriou, and the nearby Church of St. Stephen in the quarter of Constantianae in Constantinople.<sup>49</sup> As she continued to support the arts, she established herself as a well-respected, prominent patroness of arts. Another commission was found in an illuminated manuscript entitled *De Materia Medica*.<sup>50</sup> This work depicted Anicia Juliana enthroned between Magnanimity and Prudence with Gratitude of the Arts at her feet openly asserting her right to rule alongside her importance as a female patron of the arts in the Empire.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that this commission was in fact a gift from the people of Honoratae, thanking Princess Juliana for building a church in their town.<sup>52</sup> In this image, Anicia is represented in a toga of purple and gold, colors commonly affiliated with royalty and imperial status.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, she wears red shoes, ordained with pearls, and a crown with a fleur-de-lis structure, which were only worn by the empress.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, Anicia Juliana was attempting to rival the imperial family with this royal appearance. This manuscript, alongside all her privately funded constructions, asserts Anicia Juliana as a powerful woman in Constantinople, striving to gain family honor and political prestige by outstaging the Emperor.

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<sup>48</sup> Ioli Kalavrezou, *Byzantine women and their world*, Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums; New Haven: Yale University Press, © 2003 p. 71

<sup>49</sup> Mango and Ševcenko. p. 244

<sup>50</sup> See figure 5 for the image of Anicia Juliana enthroned between Magnanimity and Prudence with Gratitude of the Arts at Her Feet

<sup>51</sup> Cormack, Robin. 2000. Byzantine art. Oxford: Oxford University Press.p. 41

<sup>52</sup> Clearly showing her status as an appreciated patroness at this time in Byzantine history. Bente Kiilerich. "The Image of Anicia Juliana in the Vienna Dioscurides: Flattery or Appropriation of Imperial Imagery?" *Symbolae Osloenses*, 1502-7805, Volume 76, Issue 1, 2001, p. 171

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 174

<sup>54</sup> Ibid p. 175

## Conclusion

The construction of St. Polyeuktos was an explicit act of defiance against the Emperor. Given the political environment of the time and the gender constructs of Byzantine society, the commission of St. Polyeuktos was unprecedented. Never, on this magnitude, had a woman commissioned a private construction that rivaled and arguably out-shone that of the Emperor. In spite of this, Justinian would not allow this type of public opposition without any retaliation. Later, only five years after Anicia Juliana's church reached completion, Justinian commissioned the reconstruction of the Hagia Sophia.<sup>55</sup> This reconstruction, using the St. Polyeuktos as a guide, was grander and more impressive than any other structure that had come before. By outdoing Anicia Juliana's construction, Justinian silenced her political opposition, forever asserting his power and authority in the most stable manner possible: poured concrete. The construction of the St. Polyeuktos was driven by gender constructs which limited Anicia Juliana's ability to take a stand and yet, its construction, regardless of the effectiveness, was a pivotal point in political Byzantine History.

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<sup>55</sup> Its previous construction had been burnt to the ground by rebels who opposed his religious authoritative decisions

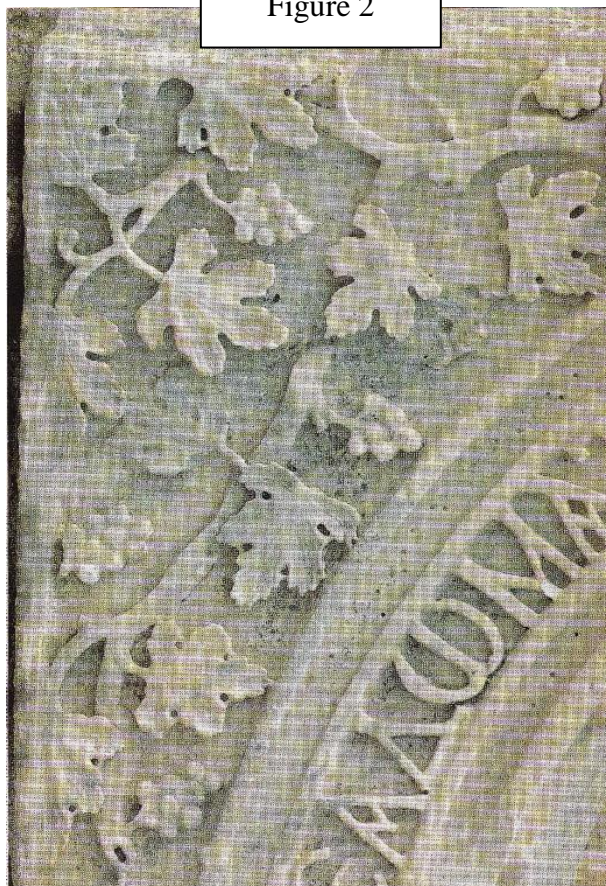


Figure 1



Part of the main entablature of St. Polyeuktos with line 31 of the poem, discovered in 1960.

Figure 2



Marble detail of courtyard carvings and inscriptions

Figure 3 and 4

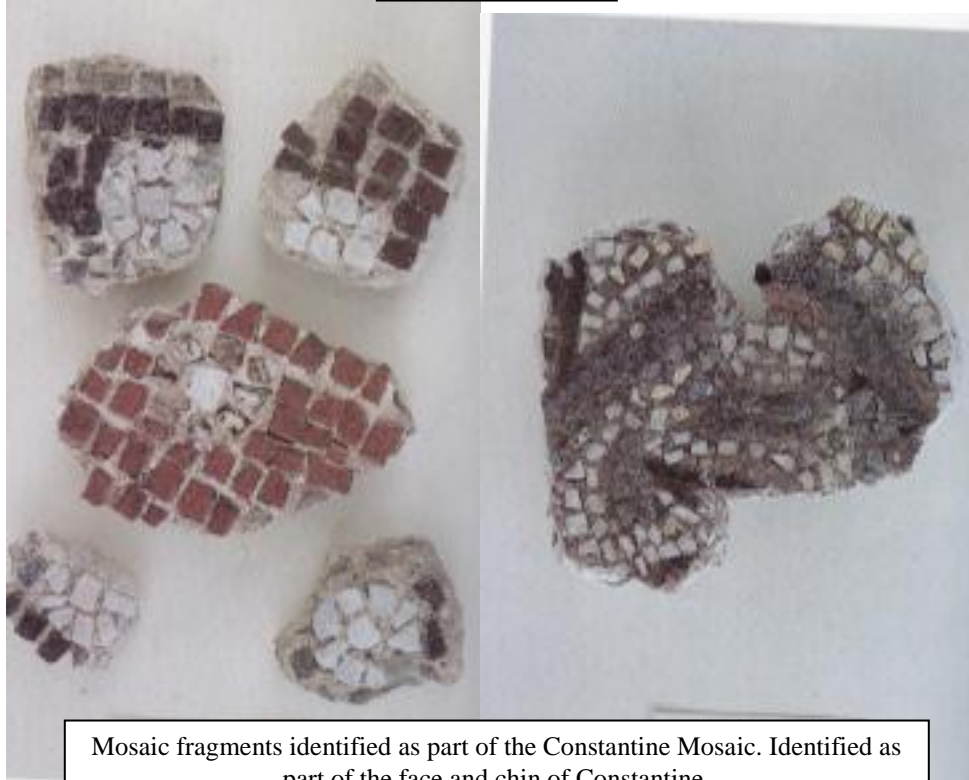
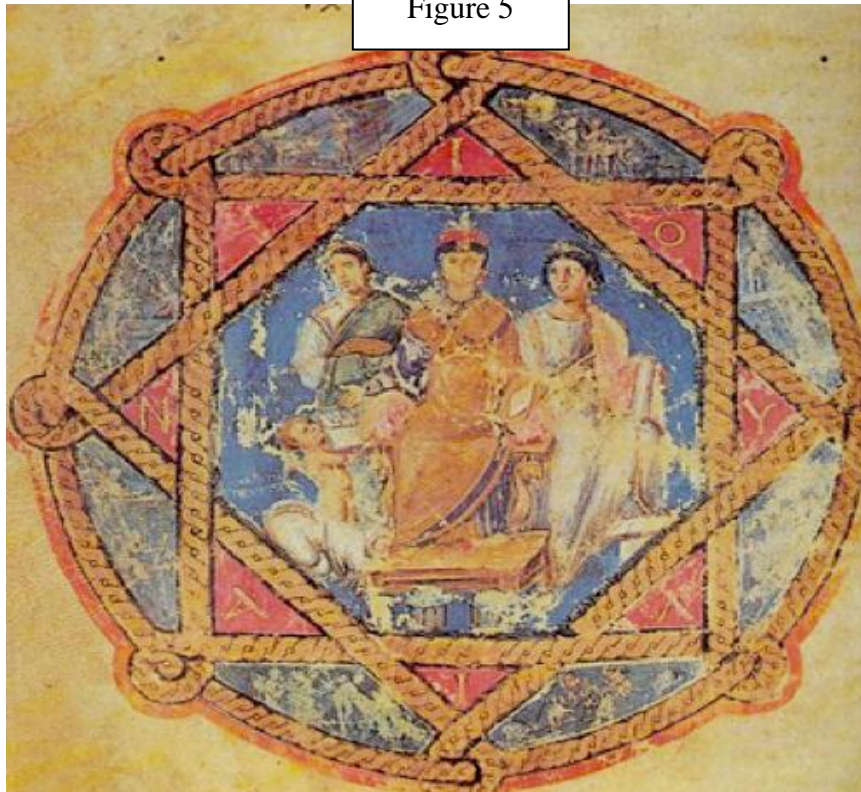


Figure 5



Anicia Juliana enthroned between Magnanimity and Prudence with Gratitude of the Arts at Her Feet

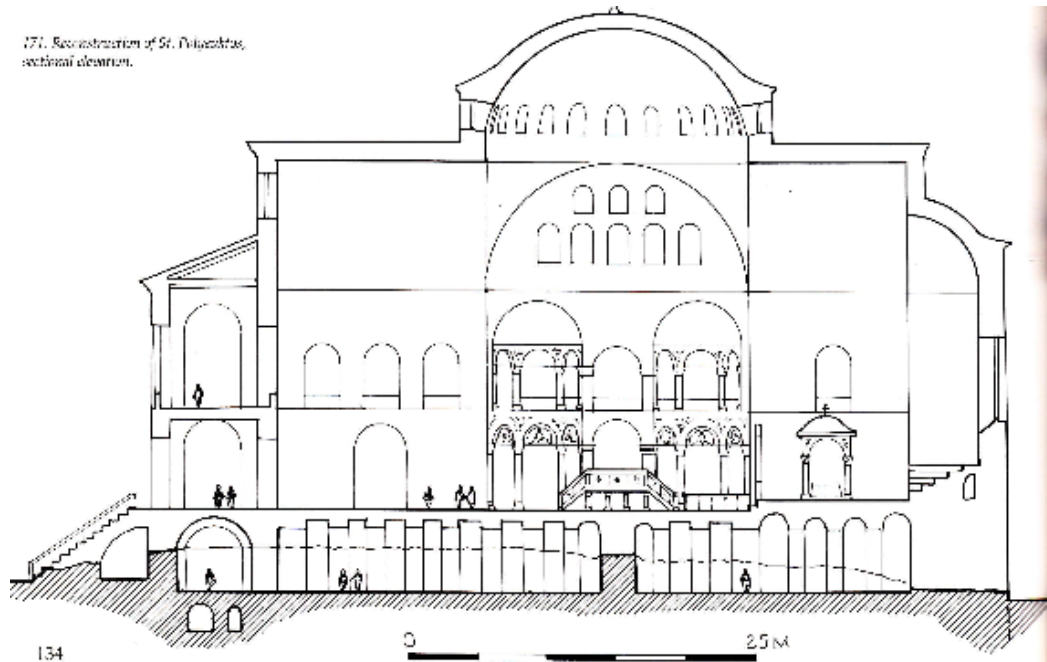


Figure 6



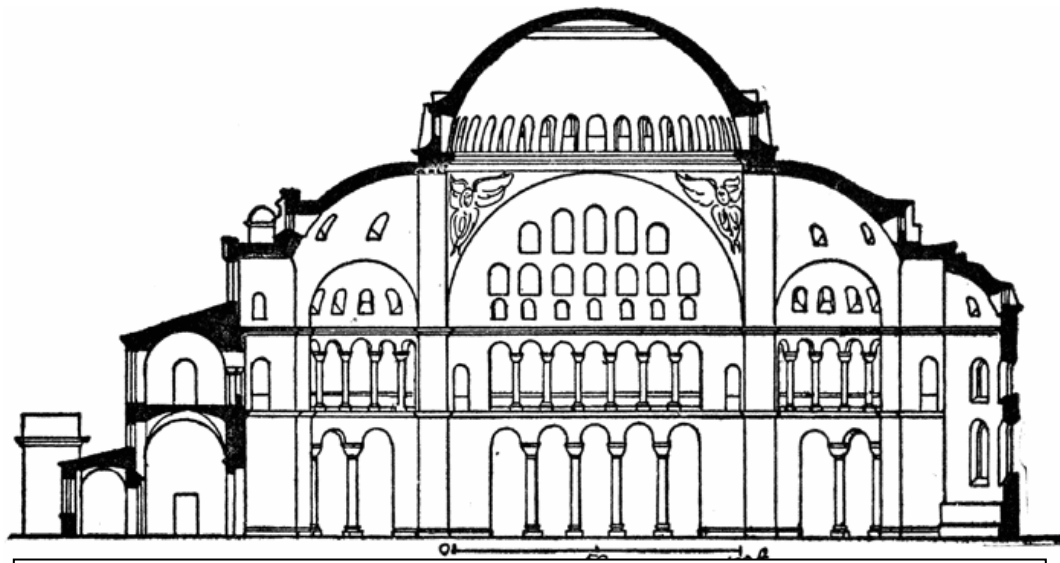
Various marble inscriptions of the 76-line poem surrounding the courtyard, nave, and narthex of the church

171. Reconstruction of St. Polyeuktos, sectional elevation.



Possible reconstruction model of the St. Polyeuktos Church

Figure 8



Reconstruction model of Justinian's Hagia Sophia